

HEAVEN'S

MAL

ALL METAL ALL THE TIME

ROB ROCK

ONCE DEAD
SLECHTVALK
KEKAL
SYMPATHY
WHAT GWAR SAYS

REVIEWS: KEKAL, ADMONISH
ONCE DEAD (DVD), SKYLINER
BETRAYER, SLECHTVALK, ROB ROCK
SERENADE IN DARKNESS, JACOB'S DREAM



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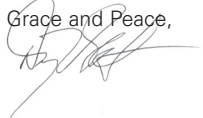
HEAVEN'S METAL

Metal is so musical.

One thing that's wonderful about this genre is how beautiful, melodic and powerful it can be. Such is the effect of Rob Rock's great voice. As we go to press he and his band are rocking Europe's Swedenrock. We are happy to give him his long-deserved props with this cover story. It'll be great to see Once Dead tear up the stage at this year's Cornerstone Festival (as well as the fest advertised at left...). It's great to have a "catch up" interview in this issue.

I have to take some time to rave about the latest issue of HM Magazine. Besides stories on Kekal, Disciple, and Becoming The Archetype, there are a bunch of cool "specialty" articles to commemorate our 20th Anniversary, like: "Metal Memories" by Bruce and DJ of Living Sacrifice, the history of HM Magazine, a debate on "Metal vs. Emo" (which was "won" by our own reporter, Daniel Jesse), and a funny piece on the old anti-rock argument Christian metallers have heard for way too many years. I love it.

Grace and Peace,



ELEMENTS

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Rob Rock photo by David Butler II

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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads



Kekal

BY MIKE LARSON

Could you please tell me what is happening now with Kekal?

Right now we are still in a promotional time for *Acidity*; we're doing some interviews for magazines, webzines, and radio programs. So far everything turns out real good. Distribution of the new album is the best yet, and everyone can get the album more easily.

Kekal wears the avant-garde title quite well. So what is it that inspires you to create outside the box?

We just don't want to limit ourselves when writing the music. The only parameter for us when writing the music is that it should come from the heart; I mean to be as honest as possible. Life in Indonesia, especially in a big ugly Capital city like Jakarta, is pretty stagnant and boring. It's like being put inside a box and you got nowhere to go. I tell you, it's very suffocating mentally and spiritually. So I think it's a natural, humanly response to get away from our own boring and stagnant everyday life by creating some new things, in order to confront the current situation...

I love the rendition of "Dance Macabre" that you had on the tribute to Cradle of Filth. How was that received? What gave you the idea to approach it that way?

It was received very well. More than what we expected before, because the song was so different than the rest of the songs on the album, and the label A&R should put our song as a bonus-track at the end of the CD as a compliment. That makes our song to be more noticed for the album reviews. We have got emails from people who haven't heard our music before the tribute and they would try to buy our albums because of that song. I think it's very helpful for the band promotion. We recorded it during our recording session for *1000 Thoughts of Violence* and exactly during our hard experiments with electronic stuffs. We had lots of already developed noises, samples, loops and weird stuffs, but yet unused for the album. We just thought like, 'Well, let's try to mess with this thing or that thing.' Something like that... But basically, we just don't want to make it similar to the original arrangement. We don't want it to sound very gothic or darkwave like the original, but more as a schizophrenic ethno-metal...

[To read the entire interview, go to hmmag.com/heavensmetal]

News bullets

The prayers of many Christian metal fans have been answered—**Kurt Bachman** and **Joey Daub** are working on a new **Believer** album. Kurt recently purchased a new guitar rig and has been getting together with Joey to write on a casual basis. The band is also interested in acquiring bootlegged video footage from Believer fans to potentially include on a DVD they plan to release. In related news, **Fountain of Tears**, who Joey Daub also plays drums for, is still alive and has been working hard over the last couple of years to transform the band into a live act and not just a studio project. The band is also writing material for their next album. Though they developed their unique sound ten years ago, Fountain of Tears' new music and live performances should be well received with the recent rise in popularity of bands such as Nightwish and Lacuna Coil.

Extol's video for the song "Pearl" has been picked up by MTV2 to be played on *The Headbanger's Ball*. Their US tour in support of *The Blueprint Dives* was, unfortunately, cut short.

The Christian heavy metal event of the year is definitely the *Beyond the Mountain festival* in San Bernardino, California on August 27 & 28. **Tourniquet**, **Whitecross**, **Once Dead** and **Deliverance** have been added to a lineup that already includes **Barren Cross**, **Saint**, **Sacred Warrior** and **Holy Soldier**. **Chris Jericho** of **Fozzy**/WWE fame, who listened to all these bands while growing up, will also be attending the festival as a special guest and will introduce several of the bands from the stage.

Speaking of Barren Cross, singer **Mike Lee** also currently sings for a band called **Drive** that can best be described as dance music.

PsychoAcoustix Records is set to release two new albums in the near future *Tophet* by **Frost Like Ashes** and *Every Knee Shall Bow* by **Tortured Conscience**.

Matt Smith, the mastermind behind **Theocracy**, gives us this report on the band: "We're completely done with one song for the new album, and now we're in the studio starting to lay down basic tracks for the next batch of songs. We're taking it slow; in fact, the writing isn't even totally done yet. We're kinda just recording songs as we get them written and rehearsed. I can tell you that I am extremely excited about the new material, and the extra dimension that Shawn and Seth bring to the band. Lord-willing, if everything comes out like it has the potential to, I think we may have a very special album on our hands."

Despite previous reports, **Guardian** is not currently working on a new full-length album, but on three new songs for another "best of" album. The band also has no tour plans.



Sympathy

BY DANIEL JESSE

Recently, I had the honor to have an exchange of ideas with Derek Form, who is the brains behind the brutal death metal band Sympathy. The two of us have certain things in common: the first being that we are both fans of death metal, and the second one is that we are both trained in the art of philosophy. So, we decided that it would be nice for him to share with you, the reader, his thoughts on why he does music, what he is trying to communicate in music, and so forth. In this part of the interview, we decided to discuss why he chose to communicate his faith and ideas through music, particularly metal, instead of the written word.

To start out with, I asked to him to speak on how he "defines" music, how he thinks of music as an artist, and whether or not metal, especially death metal, could be considered art, or if it was something different, as most non-metalheads find such expression as not art, but as noise. For Derek, and Sympathy as a whole, metal is music, and therefore an art. But, for him, there needs to be a distinction made before further discussion can take place. He sees, along with a long line of thinkers, that there are two basic types of creative outputs. The first is craft, and the second is art.

"Art describes an artifact intended by the artist to be merely a thing of beauty. Art serves absolutely no utilitarian function. In fact, any "art" that

serves any purpose other than to be a thing of beauty ceases to be "true art," and becomes a skillfully made piece of craftsmanship."

In such a definition, he is saying that he finds art only functions as art if it is just to be looked upon as beautiful. If the piece of art, in this case, a song, or an album, was meant to convey a certain instruction, or begins to function in the same manner as a hammer or other tool does, it is then just a very well made tool, and is no longer art.

This means, if you are searching for a meaning in the fantastic riffing, or the violent growls that compose Sympathy, you need to stop looking for such. It does have meaning to Derek, and might have a certain meaning for you, but there is no over-arching meaning that everyone should be able to find. This then separates Sympathy from the "turn-or-burn" lyrics of most early Christian metal bands.

This does not mean that it is just a jumble of words and notes thrown together to make a song. Derek finds that "artists take skills that they have acquired by constant practice and apply those skills to a specific goal." Thus, it takes time for him to create a song, or even the right riff for a certain spot.

So, in listening to Sympathy just relax, close your eyes, and find the beauty of this artistic creation.

[For the entire interview, go to hmmag.com/heavensmetal]

Bombworks Records has several album releases planned, including the old *Heed The Warning* demo from **Seventh Angel**. The album has been completely remastered and will include a few live tracks from performances in 1992. Other future album releases include **Requital** - *Retribution For Sin*, **Encryptor** - *Cryptic Works*, **Illuminandi** - *The Beginning and Luminaria* - *Arche*, all of which can be described as extreme metal. Finally, Bombworks will be releasing special second editions of *The Wanderer* and *Waves Are Dancing* by **Holy Blood** and *Until The Last Seal Is Opened* by **Pale Horse**. These editions will include additional songs or videos that the sold out first editions did not have.

In issue #56, we reported that **Michael Bloodgood** had suffered a "spontaneous carotid arterial dissection" causing, among other things, paralysis of one of his vocal chords. There is some good news, as Michael lets us know: "My health continues to improve and I began preaching again (albeit with only one vocal chord) in April. The doctors say it may take as long as nine to twelve months before my paralyzed vocal chord begins to function again." Please keep Michael in your prayers for a complete and speedy recovery. In music-related news, Michael has joined the Peavey artist roster and will receive a beautiful new Peavey Cirrus bass guitar as a result. Finally, Michael has recorded a few original worship songs that are currently being shopped for a possible publishing deal.

Stryper's new album, *Reborn*, is scheduled to be released on August 16 by Big3 Records. The track listing is as follows: "Reborn," "Open Your Eyes," "Make You Mine," "Passion," "10,000 Years," "If I Die," "Wait for You," "When Did I See You Cry," "Live Again," "Rain" and an updated, heavier version of "In God We Trust". Said frontman **Michael Sweet** of the new record, "Our fans have said they would like to hear Stryper with more edge, but I didn't want to do something so heavy that it would limit us. We were able to deliver the edge yet still keep the melody and catchy guitar riffs." Original members Michael Sweet (lead vocals, guitar), **Oz Fox** (lead guitar), **Robert Sweet** (drums) are joined by **Tracy Ferrie** (bass) on the album. Stryper will embark on a North American tour in support of the record this fall, when they will be showcasing material from *Reborn*, as well as performing hits from their incredibly successful run of recordings in the 80s and early 90s. Big3 Records will also release a Stryper DVD, packed with live footage and special features, by the end of the year. The DVD is history in the making. Not only is it the first Stryper DVD to be released, but it is also the first ever live music filmed in Puerto Rico. Finally, be sure to check out Stryper's version of the song "Friends" on the soon to be released *Ultimate Music Makeover: The Songs of Michael W. Smith*.

Venia, a female-fronted band, just finished recording a new 4 song mini-CD. They are now mixing and mastering the album and expect it to be released later this summer. Expect this album to be more aggressive and thrash-oriented and to have a lot better production than their last demo.

Fifteen years after the release of *The Money Mask*, **Armageddon** got back together for a reunion concert on May 29 in Herndon, Virginia. The set list included the classics "The Blazing Wasteland," "More Than Conquerors" and "Nightlight". According to guitarist **PJ Bussey**, the concert went very well and there is a good chance the band will get together again in the near future for additional concerts.

METAL TRACKS

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Divine Symphony is full speed ahead in the process of writing new material for their upcoming CD, yet to be titled. They have once again chosen Extreme Records as their label and distributor. *Sonrise*, the historic album by Scandinavian melodic doom/death metal masters **Schaliach**, is seeing the light of day once more. The CD has been remastered and will be released by Momentum Scandinavia.

In mid-May **Scott Stapp** paid a visit to Wind-Up Records and performed a half-dozen finished songs for them, and word is that they're thrilled with the results. The remaining songs are getting polished in the studio, and a fall release is anticipated.

Blissed has been very busy recording the follow up to *Waking Up The Dead*. Robert Sweet will continue to play drums for the band.

Ed Englerth, former member of the hard rock band **Armada**, just released a modern jazz CD called *The Ed Englerth Jazz Quartet*. He is also working on a project called *D.I.A.L. Business* due in the summer of 2005 that is prog-rock in the vein of Pink Floyd.

Ceremonial Sacred has finished recording their debut CD, *Our War is Only Against Hell*, which consists of eight brutal tracks of bombastic symphonic black metal in the vein of Dimmu Borgir. The release date has yet to be announced, though they have chosen Extreme Records as their label.

After 33 years of music and ministry, Christian rock pioneer **Petra** will come to a close. December 2005 will mark the end to a ministry that has boldly and consistently proclaimed the Gospel in the United States and abroad. The decision to retire the band was mutual by all members. The band has impacted generations of musicians and fans alike over the years with over seven million albums sold, four Grammy Awards, ten Dove Awards and an induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. Prior to retirement, there are talks of releasing a live album or box set. Final tours in the United States and Europe are in the planning stages. There will be no further concerts booked after this year.

Bride is currently planning a tour in Brazil during the month of August, with a potential tour of the United States thereafter if it is economically feasible. Meanwhile, the band will begin writing and recording demos,

making them available to fans as they have done in the past. In other news, drummer Michael Loy is no longer with the band.

One Bad Pig will be celebrating its 20th birthday this summer by playing at the Sonshine Festival held in Willmar, Minnesota. The band is currently compiling a Birthday Bash album, with newly recorded music and guest appearances from Mike Stand, Phil Keaggy, Crimson Thorn, Pillar, and others.

In other news of classic Christian metal bands getting back together, **X-Sinner** and **Zion** are both working on new material. Both bands are headed by Rex Scott on vocals and they promise to do their best to not update their sound.

The second **Liberty N' Justice** release, *Soundtrack of a Soul*, is shaping up to be an all-star album, with singing appearances including **Jamie Rowe**, **Josh Kramer**, **Scott Wenzel** and Oni Logan (Lynch Mob). Other rumored singers include Stephen Pearcy (Ratt) and Tony Harnell (TNT).

Metal Blade Recording artists **As I Lay Dying** recently shot their first video from the forthcoming *Shadows are Security* album to be released in June for the track titled "Confined." This grueling video shoot was documented from the hours of 4:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. at the abandoned Tustin Air Base in Tustin, CA. The video is directed by Chris Sims, who is best known for his work on videos for Lamb Of God, Norma Jean and Zao. "It was great working with Chris Sims. When we saw the rain machines, wind machine, and the lightning flashes, we knew the video would turn out killer. And although we got soaked, due to the 8,000 gallons of water dumped on us during the shoot (we had to run to the heaters in between takes to keep from getting sick), but it was well worth it for a video that came out this amazing!" exclaims vocalist **Tim Lambesis**.

Ex-Korn founder and guitarist **Brian "Head" Welch** and **Stephen Baldwin** have partnered to form Livin It Records. "Head" currently is working on his first solo record which will be released through the label. Baldwin, known for his extreme sports ministry Livin It – a skateboarding, BMX, motocross outreach to the youth – is currently touring the US. Baldwin and Welch believe that this brand of ministry is sure to quickly become the forerunner of a new edgier way to impact today's youth.

[nothin' but] News bullets

David Wayne, lead vocalist for the band **Metal Church**, recently passed away due to complications from injuries he suffered in a car accident several months ago. Those who read the republished interview with David in the Feb/Mar issue of Heaven's Metal know that he had a hunger for God. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

The recording of the next **Mortification** album, *Impaling the Goblin*, has been temporarily delayed due to the departure of drummer **Mike Forsberg** from the band. **Steve Rowe** and **Mick Jelinic** will continue working on new songs for the album over the coming months. Expect a strong release with the best material from the last two years being presented on the album. Former Mortification guitarist **Lincoln Bowen** is currently active in two bands, **Three Times Fire** and mainstream doom act The Eternal. European label Firebox has signed The Eternal, who recently completed their first Euro tour.

Rick Hunter, ex-**Soldier** and **Regime** guitarist, is almost finished with the debut album of his new band **Walk The Sky**. The artwork is currently being worked on and the music is already done. Plan on the album being released in the coming months.

Florida-based extreme metal act **Royal Anguish** have inked a deal with Holland's Fear Dark. The group's first release for the label will be a limited-edition version of their most recent EP, *Tales of Sullen Eyes*, tentatively due late summer. Royal Anguish will also be recording a brand new full-length CD during the fall of 2005 for a scheduled release in the first quarter of 2006.

Drottmar has finished recording their new album and the band is very pleased with the results, describing it as "one of the most challenging releases within black metal." The album is scheduled to be released this autumn.

As if the awesome looking *The Lord of the Rings*-quality preview of Disney's live action adaptation of C.S. Lewis' masterpiece *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe* aren't reason enough to look forward to the movie being released in December, **Amy Lee** of **Evanescence** has been signed to write and record the theme song for the film.

Dave Mustaine, lead singer of **Megadeth**, has threatened to pull out of several festival appearances in Greece and Israel because two of the supporting acts on the bill were "full-on Satanic" bands. Mustaine, who is a self-professed Christian, explained his position in a posting at the official Megadeth web site. "Yes, I did say I would prefer not to play on concerts with Satanic bands," he said. "That doesn't mean I won't, it doesn't mean I would not talk with the bands either... but to make a life-altering change and then not have some kind of effect would not have been a change at all, would it?"



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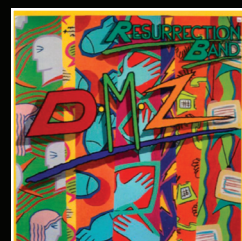
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ROB ROCK

INTERVIEW BY CHRIS BECK

Geoff Tate. Rob Halford. Bruce Dickinson. Rob Rock. Though not necessarily in that order, these four vocalists are often considered the best in the history of heavy metal. Singers come and go, but when you hear one of these legendary voices, you take notice as the thought screams through your mind, "THIS is what heavy metal should sound like!" That has always been true with Rob Rock. Over his 20 year career, Rob has proven to be a true professional when it comes to singing heavy metal. Whether

it be with Joshua, Angelica or Impellitteri, to name a few of the bands he has sung with, or on one of the albums that Rob has appeared as a guest vocalist, the consistent quality with which Rob delivers his vocals remains unmatched in the metal world. Unsurprisingly, this continues with Rob's new album, *Holy Hell*, which is yet another melodic metal masterpiece. Read on as Rob discusses his new album and also reflects back on his career.

You recently finished a tour in Europe playing with Masterplan, Circle II Circle and Pure, Inc. How did this tour compare with others you've done in the past?

This tour was longer than the others and had more bands involved, so going in I was skeptical about how we would all get along. Amazingly, we all got along pretty good and there were no major "people problems" to deal with. Everyone was very professional and I really enjoyed myself and my time on



stage.

Do you have any USA tour plans to support your new album? I know many fans have been waiting a long time for you to tour the States, as in the past you've primarily only played shows in Florida.

I am waiting to see the USA release confirm, which AFM is negotiating at this moment. I am hoping for a good tour support and marketing plan from them for the States and hopefully we can get out on the road and do some shows here.

If you do a USA tour, would you prefer to be the headlining or opening band? What bands would you like to tour with?

Everyone wants to headline but I'd rather play to more people in front of a bigger band if it's possible. You can't expect to headline until you get a couple of tours under your belt in a certain area. I'd tour with anyone who is selling tickets and drawing crowds, especially if the band package went well together.

out on the USA distribution, but I am hopeful we can get rolling here Stateside as soon as the doors open.

On *Holy Hell*, if I'm not mistaken, the song "When Darkness Reigns" is a re-recording of "Fly Away" from the *Driver EP*. You also re-recorded the song "Warrior," which was also originally on the *Driver EP* and appeared again on the *Impellitteri Answer to the Master* album. "Warrior" is a great song, and I like how you went back to the original *Driver* version, but I'm curious why you chose to release this song a third time?

The song has always been a staple of my live show and I wanted to release it on a "Rob Rock" album. It was released twice, first on *Answer to the Master* with Chris Impellitteri guitars, and now on *Holy Hell* with Roy Z guitars. Both versions are completely different guitar-wise, so I thought it'd be really interesting to get both versions released properly. The *Driver EP* was never officially released on a real label, it was a demo that was released to labels and bootlegged in

surpassed it. How much input do you typically have on the cover artwork of your albums?

I definitely have the most input, besides the artist himself. I tell them what ideas I have and want, and we throw ideas and sketches back and forth between the artist, label, and myself until we are on the right path. Then I approve the final version with the label and manager's input.

Roy Z has produced all three of your solo albums. What in particular do you like about his production style and how has he impacted your albums?

Roy Z is a song man. Songs are what matter in the long run and his gift is songwriting and pulling the best out of the artist. Roy works around the singer and always has really good ideas and suggestions to put into the ring. He is a great engineer as well and a very fun and likeable guy. Roy has been a good personal friend of mine since our *Driver* days in 1989, so we have a great chemistry as friends and songwriters.

"I work hard at keeping my lyrics in step with the Word."

What is the meaning of the album title *Holy Hell*?

The title is meant to be strong and draw attention, and to stand out amongst the other 75-100 new metal and hard rock releases that come out each month. The song is about the struggle between the Holy Spirit and the carnal flesh. The album deals with the age old struggles of good and evil, Heaven and Hell, holy and unholy, end times and life struggles. As Christians, God's Spirit fills us but we are still in our fleshly bodies and have to deal with our natural desire to do things our way and not God's way. Satan attacks and deceives Christians and wants to destroy their walk and witness and this battle is what I'm talking about – being Holy is Hell, because here on earth we are still in our sinful bodies and all of this world is on Satan's track and we are not. We are fighting the good fight!

Are you happy with the distribution deals you have for the album in Europe, Japan and the USA?

The distribution in Asia is with JVC/Victor and AFM does all of Europe so...yes, I am happy that the distribution is much larger now for my new album. The verdict is still

Europe, making it a collector's item. I think the *Driver* version needed to be heard and released properly and I think that it's a hit song and still strong so...why not?

Your lyrics have always been positive and are often Christ-centered. This is especially true on *Holy Hell*, which has some very bold lyrics. What type of reaction do you typically get to your lyrics from fans, other bands you play with and the labels that carry your albums? Have the labels ever tried to influence your lyrics?

I get great reactions from fans and really great e-mails about how the lyrics have helped people and affected their lives. God said his Word will not return void, and it's true. It goes out and touches the lives He wants it to touch and I am very happy to be able to be a part of that. I have received a few angry hate e-mails and critical reviews over the years, because the darkness hates the light and when they see the light shine it really gets them upset. I have never had any label even mention the lyrics to me in a negative way, I think they know that area is not open for discussion. They know an artist has to sing and write from his heart, so I think they just let me do what I do.

***Eyes of Eternity* had some of the best cover artwork I've ever seen, yet *Holy Hell* may have**

Over your career, you've been successful in both the Christian and secular music markets. Not many bands/artists are able to do this. What do you think has been the key to your success?

I think depending on God is what keeps me focused and keeps me going. He has provided for me at every turn so I can't take any credit for anything. God places you where you are and then you deal with it. I was never on a Christian label or in a ministry band, so I work hard at keeping my lyrics in step with the Word.

Are you able to make a living solely from your music career? If not, what other lines of work are you in?

Yes, I am a lucky one in that sense. I have diversified within the industry, too with my own small label for my own releases and distribution and that keeps me pretty busy.

You spent the majority of your career in Impellitteri, who released several great albums while you sang for the band. Looking back, how do you view your time spent in the band? Do you keep in touch with Chris Impellitteri?

My time in Impellitteri was great! Japan was very good to us and still is. Chris and I went over there probably seven or eight times together doing tours and promotions. Chris and I are good friends and we still keep in touch.

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SLECHTVALK

BY MIKE LARSON

SLECHTVALK IS A BLACK METAL BAND FROM THE NETHERLANDS; THEY HAVE JUST RELEASED THEIR THIRD FULL LENGTH ALBUM ENTITLED "AT THE DAWN OF WAR" ON FEAR DARK RECORDS. THIS RELEASE IS BY FAR THEIR BEST SOUNDING EFFORT TO DATE, FEATURING SOME GREAT COMPOSITIONS AND SOLID PERFORMANCES AND THE BEST PRODUCTION SLECHTVALK HAS EVER HAD. THEY HAVE ALSO RELEASED A DVD "UPON THE FIELDS OF BATTLE". SHAMGAR AND I WERE ABLE TO CORRESPOND A BIT VIA EMAIL TO CONDUCT THIS INTERVIEW. NOW AS A RESULT I KNOW HOW TO SPELL THEIR NAME, BUT FOR THE LIFE OF ME I AM NOT SURE HOW TO SAY IT PROPERLY. I MAY BE COMPLETELY WRONG BUT I ALWAYS THINK IT HAS TO SOUND SOMEWHAT LIKE CLEARING YOUR THROAT.



Could you give a brief history of the band?

Slechtvalk started out as a one-man's project by Shamgar in 1999. In autumn 2000 Slechtvalk released its first CD 'Falconry', which Shamgar recorded at home, though it was mixed and mastered in a real studio. From summer 2001 Slechtvalk gradually grew to a full formation and after a Split CD with Kekal in summer 2002, the 2nd Full-length album 'The War that Plagues the Lands' was released in autumn. After the release our keyboard player left, but 6 months later we found a suitable replacement. After some gigs in the Netherlands and on festivals abroad we were given the opportunity to record a DVD, which we ultimately did on November 6 2004. During that time we also recorded our third full-length album 'At the Dawn of War' and these two were released March 2005.

Because Slechtvalk has a different ideology than the typical "black metal" band, how have you been received by that scene?

Most don't care as long as the music is good and we don't harass them with our ideas, some shun us, because they think black metal is supposed to be satanic, and others hate us.

Who writes the songs? (Is it a group effort? Could you explain the process?)

Most songs are written by myself (Shamgar), but some were written by Nath, our bass player, or by the two of us together. I generally try to write a complete basic song (guitars only, with some idea of how and where the vocals should be) at home before I show it to the band. Then if most people like it we start to practice it and then others can bring their opinions. While the basic guitar lines, chord schemes and the overall composition (i.e. which riff should come after riff A and how many times etc) remains the same the end result can be very different from what I initially had in mind. While I don't really have a good sense of rhythm, and most riffs I make are mainly straightforward rhythmic wise, to Grimbold rhythm is almost like a second nature, so he can turn plain fill-up riffs into something very technical. Sometimes too technical for me to understand. Fionnghuala and Ohtar generally make up the melodies for their clean vocal parts themselves, unless we decide it'd be cool if they go along with the guitar melodies (like in 'Besieged'). Nath is a wickedly good bass player and makes up all sorts of weird bass loops. Only Hydrith our keyboard player generally sticks to the basic chords, but he does have the tendency to surprise us. So in short: I (or Nath, or a combination) write a basic song and during the practicing-process the song grows some direction until we are either satisfied with the result or not. So a song which initially was a raw and simple old school black metal song, could transform into a technical symphonic black metal song, without changing the melodies or the overall composition just by the addition of technical drums, clean vocals, keyboards etc.

What did you do different to prepare for this album than before?

On our previous album, most clean vocal parts were made up during the recording process, which was pretty late. We didn't want that to happen again, so instead we made sure that the clean vocal parts were finished before we set foot in the studio. At the time we went into the studio to record our previous album 'The War that Plagues the Lands', we were together as a band for just 6 months. Now we play for over 3 years together, so we're more tuned to each other.

What do you, Shamgar do to prepare for an album? Do you do things to prepare yourself mentally? What kind of warm up/ rehearsal schedule to you put yourself into to get your voice prepared? (By the way your voice sounds amazing on this album!)

Thanks for the comment. My voice is just as it is after many years of practice, though I now know various ways how to use it, from Abbath-like frog sounds to typical high screams. To be honest I never really warm up my voice (which might be very bad, but after over 3 years of practice it's still improving). We generally practice once or twice a week with Slechtvalk. Though I really notice it if we haven't practiced for a longer period (4 weeks or more), then I need at least 2 or 3 rehearsal sessions to get back in shape. Before we go into the studio, I try to be as rested as I can and I avoid getting a cold (which is dreadful), because recording can be mentally exhausting (and physically of course, especially if you play the drums, which I fortunately don't). And when I record I try to record as many songs as possible in one session, because during the recordings of our previous album, when I recorded some songs in the morning and some in the afternoon, I noticed that my voice was terrible during the afternoon sessions.

Let's talk about the new album a bit. What is your favorite song on the album? Why?

That's a tough one, because I like every song, because they're all special to me in one way or another. Though depending on my mood, I may like one song more than others. I think my overall favorite would be 'Under a Moonlit Sky'. I wrote this song in the week after I met this great girl at a festival and one night we went into the forest and talked with each other until the next morning well after dawn. I was both impressed by the beauty of the girl (who has been my girlfriend now for nearly 2 years) and the beauty of the Moonlit forest. I was inspired by her when I wrote the music and inspired by the beauty of nature when I wrote the lyrics.

Where was it recorded?

We recorded the album in the Mailmen Studio in Utrecht (The Netherlands). It's an excellent studio by the way. The DVD-concert was recorded at 'Hedon' in Zwolle.

So are you planning on playing out more live? Any tours planned?

A month ago we did a mini-tour with Frosthadr through Scandinavia and we'll play at some festivals next summer. And in September/October we'll do a club-tour through The Netherlands and Belgium.

Is there any possibility of Slechtvalk ever coming over to America?

I don't know if there is a possibility of Slechtvalk coming to the American continent. It costs a lot of organization and money to organize a tour like that. If the opportunity presents itself we'll gladly accept it, but I am not sure if we could organize or fund it ourselves.

What is a Slechtvalk live show like?

The idea behind our show is that we're warriors who have just returned from a battle and tell their tales and rally others to join them. We wear Medieval inspired clothing (not truly authentic though) and drag various weapons along and paint our faces with war paint, mud and blood to resemble such battle hardened warriors.



What Gwar Says

Here is a funny old interview from the HM archives. It was a real interesting experience to do an interview with someone "in character" from beginning to end; but this is the Gwar way...

Doug: So the new GWAR album...

Oderus Aroundus: Yes...

Ahhh... Were talkin' rock knob.

ARAGNA ROCK you human fool!!!

Aragna rock, yes.

Rock slob, that was our first choice of course.

Yes, of course.

You obviously took it that way.

It is being used by several different people.

Several other rock knobs are using the word 'rock knob' because they are rock knobs.

Right.

Not to be confused with rock lobster.

No, but ahh... I'd never wanna be called a rock knob.

(with a thick French accent) See you don't know... sometimes it can be very fun.

You'll have to tell me about that later.

If you are as hard as a rock, you are a rock knob.

Yes... well anyway... so is the new GWAR tour going to be...

Spectacular? YES! Of course, the greatest event ever, of course, yes.

Well that's a given, that's a given, but is it

going to be centered around the aragna rock theme or is going to be a typical GWAR show with ahh...

Of course it will be the biggest party hell's ever... ahhh... and ahh... and of course due to the incoming aragna rock asteroid that is hurling towards your planet as we speak, which of course will kill everyone on the planet except for us because of course we will leap high into the air when it hits and land on its back and fly away into outer space, leaving the planet behind and laughing all the way AH HA HA!

Huh...

Something like that.

Yeah.

Yes, yes it will be, it will be centered around the theme of aragna rock, we will be throwing a huge party.

OK, well ahh... Oderious and his little ahh... spewing about the logic about aragna rock mentioned that some refer to this burning meteor that is hurling itself to the earth as ahh... this god ahh... has a 24th second coming. So what is your opinion about...

Well there is a rumor that perhaps it is not a meteor after all and it is actually our arch nemesis Cardinal Sin who is coming to pick a big fight with us, but we hope not because if that is true then of course every night there will be a huge battle with Cardinal Sin, who is a giant transformer wanna be... Ku Klux Klan type preacher-bastard-son-of-a-(bleep).

Hmmm....

And you know, we hope it is a meteor and the first show of the tour will be the last show of the tour because of course the planet will blow up. If not we will have to repeat this every night until it actually hits.

Hmm... and what city is this first show of the tour going to be in?

CLEVELAND!!!

Ah hah...

Which you know... where better to be when the planet explodes?

Right... This will be on ah... December 31st?

You know, your Earth calender is all wrong. Your Earth days is like a 25th or 26th or something like that. I don't pay attention to such trivial details such as that.

Oh. It would be in the year 1999 of course.

Yes of course, of course. Your Earth calenders are all wrong of course, they were invented by humans and what do they know?

Ok, so what does your mom say when she's talking with her friends and goes "Yes, my son is in GWAR?"

I have no 'mom'.

AH HA!

My parents were a petri dish in a test tube.

Hmmm...

But if I had a mom she would think it was very very funny.

Really?

Yes.

Hmmm... What if the petri dish's in the test tubes converse amongst themselves?

Well you know, sometimes they do. It is very strange, and it is a silent language known only to them, but ahh... I, I don't know they would say. I think that they would maybe cling together and make klinky noises.

Uh huh... Alright... is there any press interviews going on at the moment in the GWAR room?

Well, you know there is always things like that going on; like debauchery, alcohol, drug abuse, sexual butt-(bleep) orgies.

Right... Well speaking of ahh... technology and how human technology sometimes fails us, the first question I asked you ahh... was not properly recorded... the second and subsequent questions were.

Well... that does not surprise me at all.

Yes, foul temporary human technology. So, tell us about what to expect from the upcoming GWAR tour.

Well, the show will be a wondrous spectacle of sin and debauchery, and ahh... a large, huge, massive party, and ahh... we will kill people on stage of course as usual; because people come to our shows and must be killed en mass. And ahh... there are suspicions that there will be gray aliens there and ahh... that we might resurrect the corpse of Jerry Garcia and ahh... do a number with him before, of course, killing him again.

Hmmm...

And ahh... of course it will be a wonderful show, you should come to it because it will be wonderful.

It should.

It will be lots of entertainment value.

How many people... of the percentage of people that come to the GWAR show, how many people leave the show without any uhh... sort of spittle or upchuck on their clothing?

Only the cowards that stay in the back, but you know we do our best to make sure that everyone is drenched in gore and blood and urine.

Alright... Well what is your...

I'm thinking that maybe this time we will seal the exits and flood the entire building and drown everyone in blood this time.

Hmm...

Because sometimes kids complain because they don't get enough blood on them.

Right. That would probably get expensive but...

Well you know, there's enough blood to go around.

Yeah. Well what is your definition of sin?

Fun.

Fun?

Sin is just different things to different people. The human, the human mind considers sin anything that goes against the pitiful joke of a religion of Christianity, which of course everyone knows is bull-(bleep) and failed, and has been the source... the reason for much bloodshed throughout human history... and ahh... it is just so stupid, but ahh... to us sin, 'sin is fun' go hand in hand.

So what ahh... what is the... basis for your opinion of Christianity being...

Well it hasn't worked, has it? I mean ahhh... I

the novel called the Bible?

Uh huh.

Well I... I don't know. I think it has been rewritten by humans so many times that, ah, you know, it is hard to believe that there is actually a true word of a true God.

Well what if you take ahh...

If it is true, I think He would have given up on your pitiful race long ago. I would not hold my breath for a second coming, if you know what I mean.

Uh huh.

If I was Him I would not come back. I would go somewhere else.

***"The The only true religion is, of course, GWAR.
You know, people come to GWAR and then it's just as good as any
Christianity could ever be."***

mean 2,000 years of Christians killing non-Christians and ahh... you know the hypocrisy of it all it is... It just seems like it is obvious, you know? The only people who follow Christianity are obviously chicken-(bleep)-sheep who... who are scared of what might happen to them after they die, and ahhh... I think this is very funny to me – to see people flocking to cathedrals to pray that when they die they will go to some wonderland where they will fly around with little angel wings on and sit at the foot of their impotent Lord Jesus Christ, who of course everyone knows was just a man! Who is quite dead... He's dead for 2,000 years, ya know. I don't think He's coming back and if He does come back He will be very, very, very smelly I would think.

What do you think about His claim to be God?

Who?

Jesus.

Jesus, well He isn't. Well, of course I don't think He ever claimed to be God. He claimed to be the Son of God and ahh... of course the jury is still out on what exactly on what that God was, ya know? I mean... if it was the Christian God who condemns everyone who does not follow Him, I think He is a real (bleep).

Uh huh... Well if He came down in the context of a bunch of Jews and He said, "before Abraham was born I AM," it seems like that would be equating one's self with God.

Whatever.

And so what do you think about... Well, at one point He said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me?"

Are you talking... you are talking of the words in

So have you never seen a representation of Christianity that you though was genuine or worth...

Absolutely not.

...emulating?

Absolutely not.

Huh.

The only true religion is, of course, GWAR. You know, people come to GWAR and then it's just as good as any Christianity could ever be.

So what does GWAR offer its followers?

Love and gore and rock and roll. Entertainment for the worthless pieces of green paper.

Uh huh.

And a wonderful line of t-shirts.

Hum... What would GWAR be like if they would've played Woodstock in '69?

Well, I think we would have been hippies. I don't think, ahhh... You know, if we played, if we played Woodstock, it would have been a mass-murder scene with, ahh... blood and guts and flaming carnage and and, ahh... I think history would have been completely rewritten. Of course we were still frozen at the time and, ahh... I don't think we could have lived through the 'hippy years' as it were.

I guess you would have ruined it before the Stones had a chance to at Altamont.

Oh of course, of course.

Yeah. Well ahhh... lets see.. What would you say if you had the chance to, ahh... to speak to Billy Graham, ahhh... face to face?

I think I would say... well what would I say to Billy

Graham? I would say, 'Shut up you old fool' and I would probably smash him about the head and shoulders.

Uh huh. What would you say if you had the chance to speak to, ahh.. Ahh... Saddam Hussain?

Ah, well, I've spoken to Saddam many times... I would say, 'Lighten up Saddam you crazy guy, you nut... you, you are a crazy person. What is wrong with you?'

I know many times I think you had a special appearance by David Koresh at some of your shows. What did you say to him when you had his audience?

I told him to not quit his day job, he is not a very good musician.

"...what would I say to Billy Graham?

I would say, 'Shut up you old fool' and I would probably smash him about the head and shoulders."

Uh huh. Well I guess he listened to you.

Well you know... I told him not to smoke in bed.

What, ahh... See, I guess we've gone over the basic philosophy of GWAR... What GWAR offers... What, ahh... What do you do when you take off the... the outfit and you go home and you have time off.

I sleep, I pet my doggie, I (bleep) my wife, I watch TV, I eat greasy Mexican food, I... I do things like that... I don't know.

Now is there, ahhh... What is the general feeling between GWAR and Green Jelly?

Well Green Jelly, of course, has tried very hard to emulate what GWAR is, and failed miserably, and, you know, we think it is quite amusing that they try and they try, but you know they fail miserably, and, ahh... you know, we showed them a thing or two or three about, you know, how to do the things that GWAR does and, of course, they were so stupid on drugs they forgot everything that we taught them obviously.

Now, if aragna rock does not actually turn out to be what you think it is and does not hit the earth what will your statement to the public be?

WOOPS! We were wrong again as usual, and of course, we will have to stay on this planet and record another record and tour more and ahh... you know... try to keep ourselves amused until at last one day we can leave.

Ok. Does the GWAR uniforms, do they evolve at all, or do they stay the same?

You mean our silly rubber armorments?

Yes.

Ahhh... Well of course we have our slaves, ahh... pounding out new armorments at all times you know...

Uh huh.

Occasionally they make something to our liking and we will wear it and then we will smash their heads in for no apparent reason at all.

Hmm..

Actually there is a new GWAR member that will be on stage this year. His name is Muffle and he, ahh... he makes lots of strange noises and he amplifies the sounds, of ahh... of our weapons sniping the heads of the human beings and what not and, ahh... he will be a new, a new image on stage for you to look at and say, 'What the (bleep) is that?'

Hmmm... Which is the general consensus of the audience?

Well, the general consensus of the audience is, is one of falling to their knees and begging to be drenched in blood.

Uh huh. One question to clarify when I'm, ahh, transcribing this... how would you spell 'Euuuuuuuurrh?'

With a 'U'

With a 'U'? Just several of them?

Yes. As many as possible?

Ok.

Just, I would hit the... on your, on your typewriter hit maybe an E and then about 150 U's and then an R and then a G then a H.

Ok. I appericiate that

I hope that will help you.

Yes, I think it will. It would be a good t-shirt design too.

Yes, but, ah, they don't make t-shirts that large.

Hm, ah yeah. Well, have you ever investigated some of the earliest manuscripts of what you call 'the great novel' the Bible?

Well, we have discovered that the pages of the Bible do in fact make good rolling paper for the marijuana... they burn very slowly, so it is, you know, when you run out of rolling papers for your marijuana you can use a page from the Bible.

Ahh... You must have discovered that in prison.

No, no. I discovered that in a hotel room.

Ok. Well, alright. Well, ahh... what would be your message to all the Christian heavy metal bands that are out there playing their music?

Well, I think Christian heavy metal is a joke. I don't understand how you can get a Christian heavy metal person, but ahh... I, I realize that your idols Stryper finally gave up and turned to drugs and ahh and ahhh... you know, stopped their preaching of Christianity and their lobbing Bibles at the audience.

I thought one of the members of Stryper joined GWAR.

(laughs) No. No, no, no. That would never work. Their hair is too poofy.

Ok. Well, what would it take for someone to join GWAR? What would they need to do?

Well, you don't join GWAR. You are enslaved by GWAR if you are unfortunate enough to cross our path and, and, uhh... we feel that you are worthy to lick our butt-cracks and ahh... drink our urine and be enslaved to, to forge our armorments, and to ahhh... and work on our silly rubber suits.

Uh huh.

But it nearly impossible to join GWAR.

Hmm... The reading audience will sigh.

I hope they cry. I hope they give up and quit writing us letters asking us 'How can I join GWAR?'

Hmm...

The only way to join GWAR is to spend all your money on t-shirts and concert tickets and record albums and, ahh... even then you will be nothing but ahhh... scraping off poop on the bottom of our boots, you see.

Hmm... Well, I guess... is there any questions that you want to ask me?

Absolutely not.

Ok.

I take it this is a Christian metal magazine.

Yeah. It is, every issue of course we deviate, well unless we are secretly deceived into thinking that GWAR is secretly a Christian band that's gunna make a statement someday.

Well, don't hold your breath.

Ok.

We do not even acknowledge the human religions. There are far too many of them to even be able to... to conceivably believe one of them and they all... They all want to kill each other at all times, so it just seems like a silly thing to me.

Huh. I myself must disagree with you and take the bold stance to actually say that to a member of GWAR and still go on living.

That's because you are on the other end of a phone.

Yeah.

You know we don't care what people believe, they believe whatever they want. It is fine with us. We don't care, because it really doesn't matter to us whatsoever. You know, I think that the Christians should stop killing people in the name of their Lord. I think that's very silly.

Yeah, I agree. Definitely

That is something that they have obviously done for centuries and centuries. I think more humans have been killed in the name of Christ than any other reason whatsoever, and I find that very very amusing.

Yeah... I don't know if that's true or not, but I know if it even happened once it is too many.

You know it's been an ongoing thing, you know, I mean with the, ahh... you know, with the inquisitions... What was all that about you know? You believe our way or we will kill you!

Yeah, it was pretty stupid. But anyway, we always deviate in each issue of the magazine and speak to someone outside that realm, like King Diamond will be the next interview

subject.

He's a silly man

Yes.... but anyway, thanks for your time.

Ahh... you're quite welcome.

And I hope you have a good day... You got any more interviews left?

Oh yeah, we got all kinds of interviews.

All right.

All kinds of little, tiny xeroxed fanzines with people who don't even have any real questions.

Uh huh.

Quite amusing... we hang up on them immediately.

(laughs) Great, well, take it easy

Okey dokey.

Alright

Ok, I hope you find your spiritual enlightenment and kill of course, then aragna rock will hit your planet and you will all die and realize that GOD HAS ABANDONED YOU!

Then I'll have much regret, I guess...

Yes.

Boy...

Oh, just be kind to animals.

Yeah... Ok, we'll follow your advice... and if it fails me I will pummel you to death.

I doubt it.

Yes...

See, there you are, a Christian, telling me that you will pummel me to death...

Yes...

I rest my case.

Now just write off the whole religion.

You should all lighten up.

You've proven it wrong right there with your intellect... All right, well take it easy.

Okey Dokey.

Alright.

Bye, bye.

Rob Rock cont'd

You've had some great guitarists play on your albums, including Dennis Cameron, Roy Z and the aforementioned Chris Impellitteri. Whose playing style best matches your vocals and why?

Roy Z matches the best, because he plays for the song and the singer. I never wrote the songs with Dennis, and with Chris, it's all about his guitar playing and I would create melodies and lyrics around his guitar parts. That actually worked out pretty good too, so...I tend to adjust myself to the music too.

Unlike many of the metal singers; who today can no longer seem to "hit the high notes," your voice is as strong as ever. Do you do anything in particular to keep your voice in shape?

I just try to eat well, stay in shape and pay careful attention to my voice and my environment. The voice is an instrument you need to keep track of all the time.

From Axel Rudi Pell to Warrior, you've sung on many different albums over the years. Outside of your solo albums, which album is your favorite and why?

I like most *Answer to the Master* and *Screaming Symphony* from Impellitteri (for the songs and vibes), Axel Rudi Pell - *Nasty*

Reputation and *Warrior – Code of Life* (for the "live" style vocal performances) and *MARS Project: Driver* (because the first time is always special!).

Do you have any plans for releasing a live DVD sometime in the future?

As a matter of fact, we are talking and working on putting something together in the near future. I'm sure it will take a while to come together, but I would love to be able to get a DVD out in the next year or two, whenever it makes the best sense to record and release it.

Do you have any closing thoughts you would like to share with the readers of Heaven's Metal?

Please check out *Holy Hell* as soon as you can. It comes out in the USA in July/August. Go to robrock.com for more info, tour updates, news, and monthly vocal tips. I thank God for the ability to keep making metal and forging ahead with new songs and I thank you all who have supported me in the past, present and future. God bless you!

[Read a longer interview at hmmag.com/heavensmetal]

ONCE DEAD INTERVIEW

BY ED HELLIG



Let us take a walk with me down memory lane; it's the mid-1980s, and the Christian metal movement is in full bloom, with an effervescent naiveté that exuded the ingeniousness of a newborn scene. While the talent was arguably, say, not abundant, a distinguished few started to carry not only the standard of the Kingdom, but also the idea that Christian metal was a viable expression of art, capable of competing with (gasp!) their secular counterparts. The setback, however, is that most bands in that era were either playing hard rock (Stryper, Guardian) or traditional power/heavy metal (Barren Cross, Sacred Warrior).

Enter Vengeance Rising. To say they caught the whole scene by surprise would be an understatement. The devastating quintet comprised of Roger Martinez (vocals), Doug Thieme (guitars), Larry Farkas (guitars), Roger Dale Martin (bass), and Glen Mancaruso (drums) played an assaulting style of thrash metal that gained comparisons to Exodus and Venom. Their first album, *Human Sacrifice*, is considered by some the quintessential Christian metal record, one of (if not the) best Christian metal album of all time.

This leads us back to the 21st century and the birth of Once Dead. Formed by the core members

of Vengeance Rising (Doug, Larry, Roger Dale, Glen, and added Ultimatum vocalist Scott Waters), Once Dead vies to restore that same emotion and commitment of those long lost 80s, with a new sound, a new perspective, and a renewed drive. We caught up with Doug Thieme and Scott Waters, as the band prepare to play Cornerstone Festival.

How is the anticipation of returning there after all these years?

Doug Thieme: We are very excited about returning to Cornerstone. The festival had a profound affect on us spiritually. We had spent some time with REZ and Darrell Mansfield, and I learned what it really means to be in a Christian rock band through their examples. I had become a better person and a more mature Christian through Cornerstone and that festival has a special place in my heart. It is a true blessing to have this opportunity to return and play again 15 years later.

There are plans to release a new CD by festival's time. With Roger Dale Martin now living in Tennessee, how difficult has it been to rehearse and write new material?

DT: We were hoping to have the album released at

Cornerstone, but it has been pushed back until the end of summer. It has been very difficult to take the time to write music, rehearse it and record it. We all have family obligations as well as our jobs, and that leaves us very little time to work through the new material. The new songs which we have written so far have been similar to the earlier Vengeance material, but a little bit darker. The fact that Roger is in Tennessee doesn't affect us that much. Larry and I have done the bulk of the writing in the past anyway, and with the internet, we can transfer songs to Roger and he can burn them to a CD, write his bass lines, and rehearse to them. So it hasn't affected us that much.

Scott Waters: Well, it is going to be a very different experience for me. Whereas with Ultimatum we have always written all our material as a band, Once Dead is working individually on the songs and then we will get together to hash them out as we get closer to recording. As I know it, Roger Dale has a song ready, Doug and Larry each have a few songs, and we may even record a couple songs that Doug had written for what would have been the follow-up to Vengeance Rising's *Once Dead*.

And Doug, an we expect the same barrage of Les Paul-driven sound from both you and Larry Farkas?

DT: Yes that is all Larry and I play nowadays. We have been working with different tones with our amps, but it always has that Les Paul feel to it.

Are there any other shows scheduled besides Cornerstone and Beyond the Mountain Festival?

DT: Yes, we have a few others lined up, but we need to finalize everything with each show before we release the dates.

Scott, how did the invitation to join Once Dead come about and how stoked are you to play with these guys?

SW: It actually came about through Roxx Productions. In 2002, Ultimatum performed at the Extreme Marti Gras in Anaheim. On the bill with us was S.A.L.T., a band that featured both Larry Farkas and Glen Mancaruso. During Ultimatum's set we performed our cover of Vengeance Rising's Burn. Glen heard it and went backstage to talk with us after our set. It was at that time that he said, "if Vengeance ever does a reunion show you have to sing for us." Well, in '04 Roxx Productions had the idea to get Vengeance back together for a reunion show. They contacted Larry, Roger Dale, Glen and Doug and asked them if they were into it. It was Bill Bafford who suggested I do the vocals for this one-time reunion show. Well, the guys were into doing a show, but they really didn't want to do it under the Vengeance name out of respect to Roger Martinez, so we performed the show under the name Once Dead. There was a very cool vibe at the rehearsals and at the show, so instead of just the one reunion show, we decided to carry on as Once Dead. You have to remember, I was a huge fan of these guys since I bought "Human Sacrifice" in '88. I saw them live in 1990 on the Once Dead tour. I also followed the guys through Die Happy. I literally had the posters of these guys hanging on my walls. So it was an honor for me to share the stage with them. Had this been the only show I ever got to do with them, I would have been grateful. What more can a fan ask for than to actually get the opportunity to sing for one of his favorite bands?

Going back to the Vengeance years, around the

time Human Sacrifice came out: have you ever imagined that it would become as influential and relevant as it has, to this day?

DT: I had no idea. We had a vision for a certain style of music, and the crowd we wanted to reach, and the rest fell into place. Roger Martinez's voice helped us pinpoint our style. He tried out for us and we were astonished at how disgusting it was, yet a very unique quality to it. Once his voice became part of the vision, the band took off. When we were on our first tour, there wasn't anyone around who sounded like Martinez, and now there are thousands. We were doing something no one else was, and taking a risk, but it was well worth it.

Doug, you have been outspoken in the band's message board about your devotion to the Catholic church. Some fans were taken by surprise to learn this. Since then, you have been courteous in defending your beliefs and answering the numerous questions that have been posed. How do you interpret their surprise, and how has the acceptance been?

DT: I never thought that it would really be an issue. Then a few people started asking questions and the dialogue began. Most of the people who I encounter who have a bias against the Catholic church, are ignorant of what the church actually teaches. Once we dispel the misconceptions, then they understand that Catholics are Christians. There are over a billion of them out there in the world, and are doing God's work like the rest of Christendom.

Most of you guys are now married with kids. How have you juggled your call to be a musician with family life?

SW: I have two great kids. My son is already a teenager and is playing drums in a youth band himself. Juggling my call isn't that hard with a supportive family behind me. My wife is very understanding and supportive. The thing about Once Dead is, since we are scattered throughout the country, we don't get together for weekly practices or anything like that, so it's not as big a strain as you might imagine.

DT: Well, some of the guys were already married with kids back then, so it isn't that different in

a sense. Larry is still single, so any women out there looking for a hunk go to www.marrylarry.com (laughs). As for myself, I am incredibly busy with my job and family. I coach my kid's soccer teams and that takes up a lot of time. The band has had to take a backseat to life I guess, as where before the band was my job and life took a backseat to it. So it is harder to plan and take time out of my life for rehearsal and what not. I am thankful for this summer, there are no sports happening, and I have a lot more time to dedicate to music.

What kind of legacy do you expect Vengeance and Once Dead to leave behind? How do you want people to remember the band?

DT: This question is very specific to Once Dead right now. Once Dead is here because of the fruits of our labor in Vengeance. I love talking to people on the message boards that tell us of stories of how we had a profound affect on their lives, and now they are having a profound affect on the lives of others. So I guess more than anything, I want people to remember why we were a band in the first place, and that is Jesus Christ. We are servants of God, and in the end I would like people to see that the Gospel went out through us, and that any legacy which is left behind is because of God. We love God and if any legacy is left I would like to see it as the fruits of our ministry.

SW: Vengeance opened the door for so many other extreme metal bands to follow. It's such a shame that their album distribution deals were limited to Christian bookstores only. They really should have been on scale with bands like Testament, Dark Angel and Slayer. Who else was doing music that extreme, with those insane vocals in 1987? Vengeance's music legacy is important and I know they impacted many bands that followed. I have heard bands like Extol credit Vengeance with being an inspiration. They were certainly a big influence on Ultimatum. However, Vengeance also had a reputation for preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. They weren't ashamed of their faith whatsoever. Roger's lyrics were almost straight up Scripture. If they are to be remembered for anything, it's that they strived to populate the Kingdom of Heaven. That is their real legacy.

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ALBUM REVIEWS



ROB ROCK HOLY HELL

Holy Hell is Rob Rock's third solo album, and it's excellent as expected. As metal fans know, every album that Rob is involved with ends up being great. Every. Single. Album. There simply aren't enough superlatives in the English language to describe the consistent quality of Rob's music. When you buy a Rob Rock album, you can count on getting a fantastic melodic metal album; like all the others, this one is destined to be a classic.

Although *Holy Hell* may be a little bit heavier than previous efforts, Rob's sound hasn't changed much. Some may complain about this, that all his music sounds the same. Well, as the old saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." As usual, *Holy Hell* has great production and cool cover artwork. The lyrics are well written and perhaps his boldest yet. Rob's vocals are top-notch, with a bit more variety in delivery this time. All the songs are great, but the standout tracks include the beautiful ballad, "I'll Be Waiting For You" and "I'm A Warrior," which was previously released by Impellitteri on *Answer to the Master*. Fortunately, here we get the original Driver version with its unforgettable guitar introduction.

What else is there to say? Go and buy what may be the best metal album of the year. Then hope and pray that Rob will tour the USA to support *Holy Hell* and that he comes to a town near you.

[AFM] Chris Beck



SLECHTVALK AT THE DAWN OF WAR...

(Fear Dark Records)
After their last two releases, one wondered if Slechtvalk would ever cross that invis-

ible line that separates the good extreme metal bands and join those who are considered truly great. While the debate will probably still rage on after the release of *At the Dawn of War*, one has to admit that the band has made another great stride forward. Slechtvalk has continued on with the sound that they had on their previous album, but

they have incorporated many more elements to spice up that sound. For one, they've went for a heavier and rawer sound. They also use more soprano vocals, haunting clean male vocals, flutes, and acoustic guitars, to add more of a folky/pagan metal feel to a lot of their songs, while still keeping that furious black metal foundation. It seems that the band is zeroing in on creating great songs and not just worrying about blasting your brains out. Lyrically the entire album focuses on war, but knowing the band members' faith it's easy to come up with multiple meanings, including spiritual ones. This is the limited edition digipak which includes the live DVD, *Upon the Fields of Battle*. This is an incredible concert that is very professionally recorded. Great sound, great camera work, and a fantastic performance by the band. It's a must for any Slechtvalk fan. All in all, I must say that the band has scored huge with this release. Let's hope that it gets them the attention that they so deserve. [Fear Dark] Matt Morrow



KEKAL ACIDITY

It's true: Kekal are not simply an extreme metal band anymore; they haven't been simple for a while now. Kekal is an avant-garde metal band, and that opens the door for them to step into unknown territory without ever losing their sound. *Acidity* is by far their mellowest album and yet it is their best effort to date. A virtual kaleidoscope of sound; the mixture of extreme metal, jazz, industrial, electronica, dance and progressive rock may take some time to digest, but is truly worth it in the end. Now all these sounds are mixed into some well written songs; this is not just an exercise in weird. No, it is apparent that Jeff and crew have been honing their songwriting skills thru the years, Kekal is maturing gracefully. The guitar playing on this album is superior, some of the better guitar solos I have heard in a while. Now I don't love every single one of them on the album, but you have to give credit to them for nurturing and developing their skills so well. The drumming is great. First off, there is a live drummer

here; though I believe you can still hear the "black box" from the previous album mixed into some of the songs, thru loops, samples and other such fancy tricks. The diversity in vocal styles is amazing, from the classic Kekal screams to clean vocals obviously inspired by Rush. Stand out tracks are "Thy Neighbors Morality," "Broken and Envy and its Manifesto." [Fear Dark] Mike Larson

ONCE DEAD

RETURN WITH A VENGEANCE (DVD)

Last fall, a historic Christian metal concert took place and, fortunately, Roxx Productions was there to record it all. Once Dead is four of the original members of Vengeance – Larry Farkas, Roger Dale Martin, Glen Mancarus, and Doug Thieme aided by Scott Waters, the lead singer of Ultimatum, a skillful Christian thrash band.

Songs played are exclusively from Vengeance's first two albums, including all of your favorites. "Burn," "Human Sacrifice" and "Into the Abyss" sound especially good. Although I'm sure this reunion necessitated a lot of practice, Once Dead sounds fantastic, like they've been playing these songs every day for the past ten years. The music is clear and crunchy; Return has an excellent sound for a live recording. Scott does a great job on vocals, melding his thrash/death delivery perfectly with the band. Roger who?

The bonus features on *Return* include a new Once Dead song that sounds very much like Die Happy. There is also an open and honest interview with the band, which includes Glen revealing that at first he didn't like Vengeance's music, but he stuck with it because he saw how God was using the band. *Return* is interesting and entertaining, and is a must-have for fans of Vengeance. [Roxx] Chris Beck



ADMONISH DENYTTERSTA TIDEN

This band was around for awhile back in the nineties and has recently reformed. This short sampler is comprised of three songs: one old and two new, weighing in at about 17 and a half minutes.

The production is good and the songs are, too. The thing that stands out the most on this disc is the clean vocals, excellently executed! This really makes me want to hear a full length album. Definitely a band to watch for! [Self Released] Mike Larson

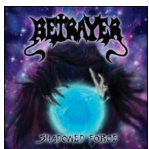


SLECHTVALK

THUNDER OF WAR

Right on the heels of their incredible new full-length is the maxi-single, *Thunder of War*, by Slechtvalk. The disc contains two versions of "Thunder of War" and two great exclusive tracks, "Illusions" and "Loss." "Illusions" stays true to the band's black metal side, while "Loss" shows the band's lighter side with all female vocals amidst the slower, yet heavy guitars. This may be a short disc, but it's well worth the money for any Slechtvalk fan. Pick it up for just \$5 US at fear-dark.com. It's definitely worth skipping one day of Starbucks for those on a tight budget.

[Fear Dark] Matt Morrow



BETRAYER

SHADOWED FORCE

This three-song EP is a mixture of classic metal and thrash with well-written songs and quality guitar playing, especially the lead guitars on the title track. I wish the vocals were a bit harsher; though they aren't bad ... they don't really fit the music. The lyrics are positive, but only vaguely Christian. Cool cover artwork and clean production complete the package and make this an album worth buying.

[Betrayer] Chris Beck



SKYLINER

LIGHT COMES OUT OF BLACK
This band is a rock/metal hybrid with a Prog flavor. It took me three listens to get over the production quality of

this, and once I did I found myself enjoying it. The songs are good despite some timing errors and the vocals "wavering" from

time to time. I like the fact that they seem willing to go outside their comfort zone, sometimes it works well and other times it flops. Thankfully those moments are not too frequent. [Self Released] Mike Larson



JACOB'S DREAM

DRAMA OF THE AGES

Jacob's Dream is back, and better than ever! Their vocalist for their first two cds has moved on to other interests, and seasoned veteran Chaz Bond has stepped in, and stepped up to the microphone. Jacob's Dream continues on in their strength. The music has not changed, except for getting better, but the new addition has brought the band into a new dimension. They were a decent Power Metal act, but now, with a singer that has to be some sort of weird love child of Geoff Tate and Bruce Dickinson... Or at least his voice sounds like that. He has the soaring power, but can also get a deep rich sound out of his voice.

Now that you are dying to hear this, let me tell you why I cannot give this cd a very high review. This reason is the production. The problem is, the production is not bad, it's adequate. This makes it very hard to really like this album. The guitars are muddy at times, allowing them not to shine. The drums? I don't think that the drummer was in the same room when they recorded, He was around, two or three blocks away, so the drum work, which is great, but you have to strain to hear all that's going on. The other cool part about this cd is that they heavy metal up a popular classical song. The bad part? In the mix, they cannot decide which instruments should be up front. Not bad on the cd, would be killer live.

[Metal Blade] Daniel Jesse



VARIOUS ARTISTS

SEAL THE ABYSS

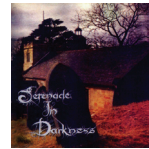
The Seal the Abyss Compilation shows off various bands, of various styles, but there is a catch. Most of these bands, you probably haven't heard. Heck, maybe you haven't even heard of

them. So, what you are faced with is 16 demo-quality or better songs, and their sole purpose is to make you happy. And the thing is, it holds up to its side of the bargain, if you like various forms of symphonic black metal, with a few death metal groups scattered about.

Now this sounds great, but if you want to put out underground black metal acts, you need to be in any year between 1991 to 1999. Thus, everything on this compilation I have heard before. I have heard the demos of Antestor, Dark Endless, Crimson Moonlight, and even Crimson Thorn. Not to say this to take away the talent of the bands, or at the growth some have made, my ears just like to hear fresh new crisp songs.

With all that out of the way, this would be a great way to get exposed to various artists, so you do not find yourself only listening to the same bands over and over again. The standouts for me are the first three songs, one from Abolishment of Hate, one from Dark Endless, and one from Arvinger, And then, a nice and brutal song by Blooded. Worth exploring for finding new bands, and several unreleased songs.

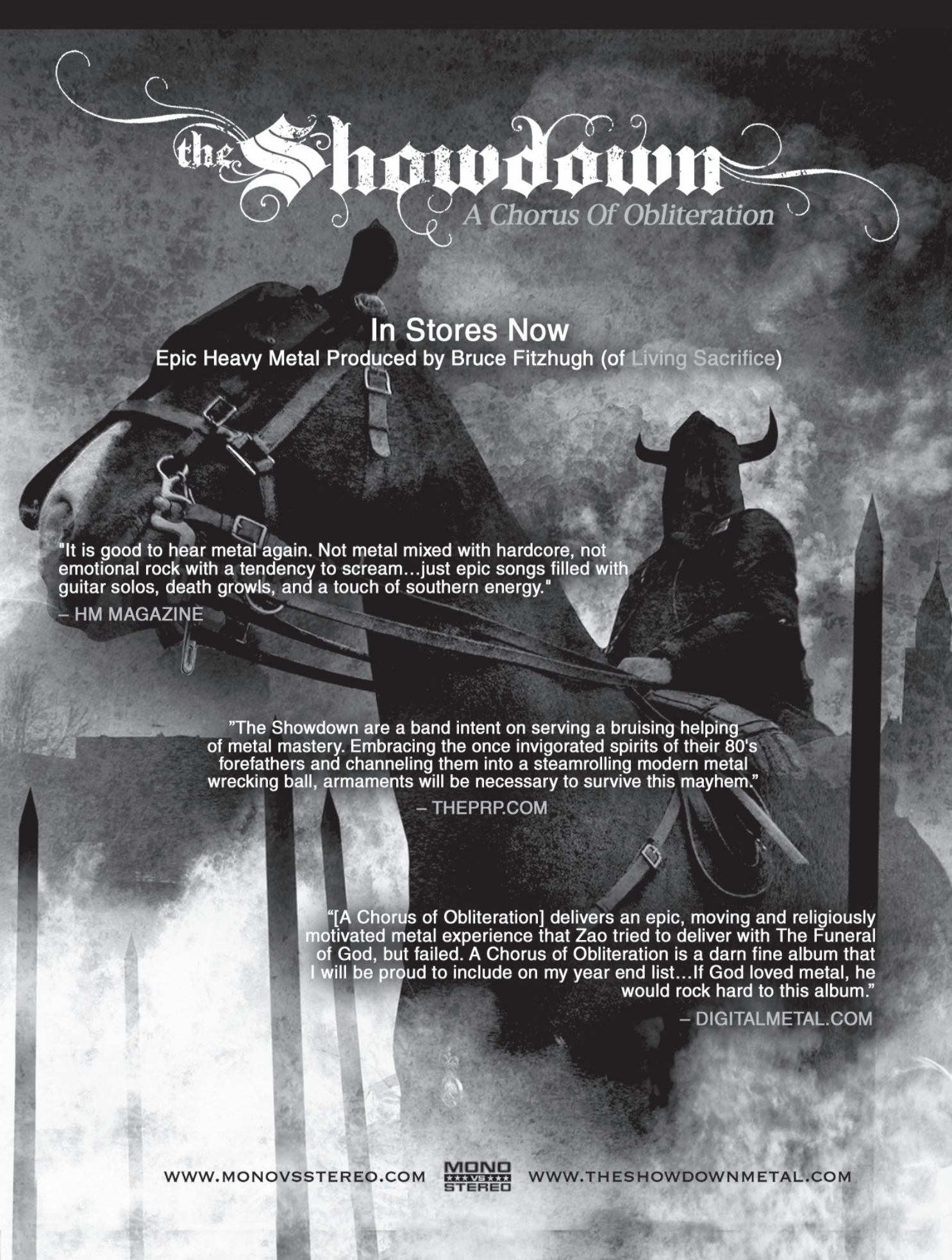
[Deathcrush Records] Dan Jesse



SERENADE IN DARKNESS

S/T

One of the new promising bands to hail from the Brazilian scene, Serenade in Darkness plays a symphonic black/gothic metal mix reminiscent of Tristania and The Sins of Thy Beloved. The female vocals fault at times (most prominently at "The Fall of Lucifer," around 3:12), but with some more experience under their bullet belts, the band could have been comparable to every other act at Napalm Records. As it turns out, this is their swan song, as the band has reportedly broken up. [Independent] Ed Hellig



the Showdown

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"[A Chorus of Obliteration] delivers an epic, moving and religiously motivated metal experience that Zao tried to deliver with The Funeral of God, but failed. A Chorus of Obliteration is a darn fine album that I will be proud to include on my year end list...If God loved metal, he would rock hard to this album."

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THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

The responsibility of the Christian Musician.

Well known Australian journalist Andrew Bolt who is a non-Christian has made some interesting observations in his columns. Bolt claims that the Christian church is essential for the stability of society. The family values & healthy life choices the church promotes helps keep the tearing fabric of our society together. Bolt states that Christians should be more & more actively Christian. A big statement from a non-Christian.

I have been questioned for my stand on what is true Christian metal & what is not. This year is my 21st year playing in Christian metal bands. Many of the upcoming Christian Rock & Metal bands' members are not even 21 yet. We all need to take a listen to the bands that started Christian Metal in the early to mid 80's. Jerusalem, Stryper, Barren Cross, Bloodgood & Whitecross. The lyrics were all about The Christian Faith & Salvation only through a personal Faith in Jesus.

Is Christian Metal in danger of being labelled "new age metal" or "straight edge metal?" Hiding or watering down the message in hope of being more widely accepted is not what the "True Christian Metal" band should be doing. If a band of Christians wants to play positive music, then they should chase a career in the mainstream market only. Christian bookstores, webstores & Festivals should be places where Christians hear music that strengthen their walk with Christ. Stryper & Disciple have proven that you can also still be



popular in the mainstream & have a strong Jesus message. So I ask all young Christians playing Hard Music to consider this: Unless someone knows Christ as their personal saviour they are going to Hell! No positive message alone can bring non-Christians to Faith in Christ, or strengthen Christians in their walk with Christ.

In these evil times we will rise!



Kekal - Acidity CD
Avantgarde Metal
After huge success with their previous album '1000 Thoughts Of Violence' Kekal returns with a new masterpiece!



Slechtvalk - At the Dawn of War CD
They are already known as the leading Dutch dark/black metal legends. With their new cd and first dvd Slechtvalk proves their status again. Artwork by the mighty Kris Verwimp!



Slechtvalk - Upon the Fields of Battle DVD
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SOUND ADVICE

By Pastor Bob

I have stopped listening to Christian radio.

It just occurred to me. I didn't do it on purpose, necessarily. It just happened over time. I lost interest.

As I was reading a great book by the late C.S. Lewis, this paragraph jumped out at me: "I believe that any Christian who is qualified to write a good popular book on any science may do much more by that than any directly apologetic work. The difficulty we are up against is this. We can make people (often) attend to the Christian point of view for half an hour or so; but the moment they have gone away from our lecture or laid down our article they are plunged back into a world where the opposite position is taken for granted. What we want is not more books about Christianity but more books by Christians on other subjects – with their Christianity latent." C.S. Lewis – God In The Dock

That explained it. I think I just got tired of hearing the same ol' thing time after time. I found myself searching out music with deeper meaning and more creativity. Unfortunately, that is rare these days on Christian radio – and in the Christian sub-culture for the most part.

I find myself reminiscing often these days. I am excited to have been a part of the Christian Metal movement. I remember the days when the message was fresh, raw, and underground – rejected for the most part by the Christian sub-

culture. Our focus wasn't Christian radio. In fact, it wasn't even the Christian crowd per se. It was an honest attempt to bring the Gospel message to our piers. Period.

I also remember "working" the clubs - striking up conversations with people at the tables and in the parking lots. Becoming friends with the "other" bands. I don't think we thought of playing the clubs as "Christian" verses "secular" but more as a great opportunity to share another message or simply another viewpoint on lifestyle and the meaning of life.

Now, there is a lot more acceptance by the Christian culture for a variety of musical styles. But I see the focus has changed from bringing the Gospel to our piers, to buying into the Christian music formula for success. As a result, it has sucked the life and creativity out of many artists. And I also wonder whom we think we are reaching? If I am tired of the same samo samo on the radio, then I wonder what the rest of the world must think!

So, now my decision has become conscious. I want to listen to relevant music that speaks to my heart more deeply, and causes me to think. I want to be challenged with new ideas and meaning. My relationship with Jesus is so much bigger than the same buzzwords used over and over again. I sure see the problem, but I don't fully see the solution ... yet. But I'm sure we are up for the challenge!

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It's called "losing touch." We forget how vital, passionate, and excited we once were with some of these aspects of our life. Even though some of us have had our minds blown and our lives turned upside-down by a loving Creator Who has invaded our lives on this earth with His Holy Spirit... The dramatic turn-around and all the emotions that are touched by such a change are like soul-markers that can remind us of what's important and worth remembering. We need to re-connect with what makes us alive. We need the by-products and fruit of spiritual discipline. We must spend time with those we love, period. Then we will grow.